



Submission Template | Asbestos Safety Training Options for Workers Entering Trades

Submission from: SafeWork NSW

Responses to questions posed:

1. Do you agree that asbestos awareness training is required *before* apprentices are at any risk of asbestos exposure? If so, what training do apprentices need?

SafeWork NSW agrees that training in asbestos awareness should be undertaken before apprentices commence working with asbestos. Apprentices should be trained in identification, safe handling of, and control measures for asbestos specific for their trade.

It would be beneficial to also incorporate some practical components as part of their apprenticeship training that is specific to their trade when working with asbestos containing material. An overarching history of asbestos use and health affects should also be included. For those workers that have already completed their apprenticeship or received their trade qualification an online asbestos awareness training course should be available which will also incorporate practical demonstrations within the training.

2. While all WHS laws impose duties on PCBUs (or equivalents) to provide training, they are not prescriptive about what training needs to be undertaken or who can provide that training, apart from the ACT. Do these laws provide adequate protection to workers at risk of being exposed to asbestos? If not, how could they be improved?

Mandated asbestos awareness training should be required that is specific to the worker's trade. This could be implemented as a core National Unit of Competency that will include identification, safe handling and control measures for asbestos and then specific elective topics provided for different sectors ie plumbing, electrical, carpentry etc.

There is currently an asbestos awareness course that has been designed specifically for solar panel installers that is housed on the Construct NSW Digital Learning Platform <https://training.tafensw.edu.au/constructnsw/>.

This platform would be a suitable platform for additional industry specific asbestos awareness courses in NSW.

The introduction of a National Unit of Competency would require an amendment to WHS legislation (Clause 445) The Unit of Competency would be delivered by competent trainers to provide training and assessment.



Attendees would be provided with a Certificate of Attainment upon successful completion of the Asbestos Awareness Training which should include interactive tests/quizzes of candidate knowledge throughout the training course.

3. In your state or territory do the current asbestos training provisions in WHS regulations and codes provide enough information to determine what 'suitable and adequate' training means for asbestos related jobs?

Under WHS legislation, Clause 445 specifies the basis of the training which includes identification, safe handling of, and suitable control measures for asbestos but doesn't provide trade/industry specific training information.

In NSW, Asbestos Awareness training can be delivered through various methods and often on an ad hoc basis including toolbox talks, online training or as part of a Safe Work Method Statement etc.

There is varying levels of compliance and quality of information provided to workers, and PCBU's can undertake the training themselves with minimal oversight from the WHS regulator.

4. If further prescription about training is desirable, are there particular occupations which should be targeted (see for example the list at Appendix 1 setting out the occupations listed under the ACT legislative scheme).

In addition to the listing of trades in Appendix 1, SafeWork NSW would also recommend the following trades/industries are included:

Maintenance workers

Real estate industry workers

Landscape/gardening/groundskeeper

Solar installers

Bathroom and kitchen renovators

Pressure cleaning workers (incidents of pressure cleaning asbestos roofs and external sheeting)

5. Is nationally recognised training generally preferable to non-accredited courses to meet PCBU duties for workers entering trades who may be exposed to asbestos? Why?

SafeWork NSW would prefer Nationally recognised training than non-accredited courses as it will provide greater assistance to businesses and workers to meet their training obligations.



6. Do some PCBU's find choosing asbestos training difficult given the range of choice and the need to ensure training meets duties under WHS laws? Why? Do small businesses face any particular challenges in this regard?

PCBU's do have difficulties training workers in asbestos awareness due to a lack of available training courses and varying methods of delivering asbestos awareness training. PCBU's and small businesses who have limited time and resources would benefit from a prescribed National Unit of Competency to meet training their obligations.

7. Which of the options at 6.1 – 6.5, if any, do you support or not support and why? (You may wish to rank the options in order of preference).

- 6.1 Maintain the status quo – not supported
- 6.2 Work with industry to add a core unit of competency – support in principle as consultation must occur with individual industry sectors to develop specific industry training.
- 6.3 Increased encouragement from WHS regulators to choose specific training – support in principle that WHS regulators are involved in the review and approval of course content.
- 6.4 WHS regulators to approve asbestos awareness courses and training providers – support in principle that WHS regulators approve final course content that can be delivered online by a Registered Training Organisation that are approved by a government regulatory body.
- 6.5 Adoption of mandatory asbestos training requirements (the ACT model) – supported in principle of a mandatory unit of competency however it requires trade/industry specific information to be incorporated into the training course.

8. 6.2 Are there other levers which could be used to ensure all workers entering trades who may be exposed to asbestos receive adequate asbestos safety training?

Online refresher training for all workers who may be exposed to asbestos whilst undertaking their work to be undertaken on a regular basis (ie every two years).

9. Are there any other issues you would like to comment on regarding the adequacy of asbestos safety training especially for workers entering trades where they may be exposed to asbestos?



Asbestos Safety Training Options for Workers Entering Trades **CONSULTATION SUBMISSION**

SafeWork NSW is keen to be involved in any further consultation and progression of asbestos awareness training for workers and appreciates the work already undertaken by ASEA to develop the discussion paper.